

Grand Jury's Version of The Watergate Coverup

Washington

According to a federal grand jury, the five obscure men arrested inside Democratic National Committee headquarters at 2:30 a.m. on June 17, 1972, had powerful allies at the highest levels of the U.S. government.

In a 50-page indictment returned yesterday, the grand jury told a tale of thwarted efforts to exert influence to free the defendants, of the raising of vast sums of money to buy their silence, and those trying to get at the truth.

What follows is the story as alleged by the grand jury:

Within hours of the Watergate arrests, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell met with Robert C. Mardian in Beverly Hills, Calif. Mitchell told him to have G. Gordon Liddy try to get Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst to release the men being held by Washington police.

By noon on June 17, Liddy had found Kleindienst at Burning Tree golf club but the attorney general flatly rejected his suggestion that the Watergate burglars get preferential treatment.

Within 24 hours of the break-in, H. R. Haldeman, White House staff chief, instructed Gordon Strachan, a member of his staff, to destroy documents in his files.

And within 48 hours of the break in, John D. Ehrlichman, another top White House aide, told John W. Dean III to get word to E. Howard Hunt Jr., to get out of the country.

Ehrlichman also told Dean to get the contents of the

safe in Hunt's office in the Executive Office Building.

There was a meeting in Mitchell's Watergate apartment the evening of June 19, at which the former attorney general allegedly suggested to Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy director of the Nixon re-election committee, that he destroy documents in his files.

The frantic clearing of files and effort to free the arrested men were followed by the search for money, enough of it to keep the defendants from telling all they knew.

It was only a week after the break-in, said the grand jury, that Mitchell and Mardian, a former assistant attorney general, suggested to Dean that the CIA might be a good source of covert

funds for the defendants.

And two days later, Ehrlichman agreed it was worth a try.

But it turned out that Nixon political fund raisers were better sources of money, the jury indicated.

Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's personal attorney and long-time political fund-raiser, was recruited to come up with money, and Anthony Ulasewicz, a former New York cop, was given the job of delivering the cash.

On July 7, Ulasewicz made his first delivery, \$25,000 in cash to William O. Bittman, Hunt's lawyer.

There would be 11 more deliveries for a grand total of \$402,500.

Another source of availa-

ble cash turned out to be \$350,000 in campaign funds Haldeman had in his White House safe. Strachan took it, in two deliveries, to Frederick C. LaRue, a campaign committee aide, for ultimate distribution to the defendants and their families.

But the demands for money were proving insatiable. And there were other demands that could be more difficult to fill — Hunt and James W. McCord Jr., wanted assurances of executive clemency.

Only one man, the President, could grant it.

According to the grand jury, Charles W. Colson, White House special counsel, discussed clemency for Hunt on January 3, with Ehrlichman and Dean. A few days later, Mitchell allegedly asked Dean to have assurances of clemency passed on to McCord.

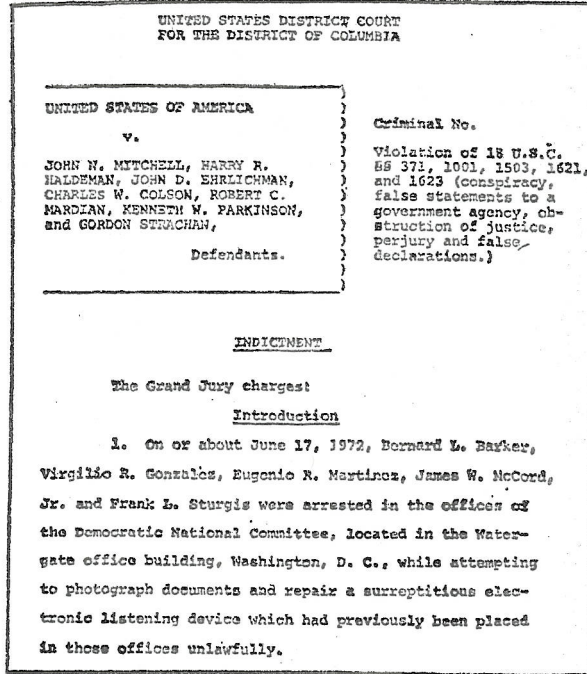
The grand jury gave no public indication of whether the President was a party to any clemency discussions.

By late March, it was clear the demands for money would continue. The grand jury said that on March 21, Haldeman and Dean "attended a meeting at the White House" at which Hunt's demand for another \$120,000 was discussed.

That meeting was in the President's office. Dean and Haldeman both have testified that Dean told Mr. Nixon that he expected the demands to run as high as \$1 million over a period of years.

They both agreed the President said that much money could be raised. But Haldeman said Mr. Nixon added that "it would be wrong" to raise the money. At a news conference on May 22, 1973, Mr. Nixon supported Haldeman's version.

But the grand jury, which had access to the White House tape of the meeting, said Haldeman lied.



This is a portion of the first page of the indictment handed down in the Watergate case

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The panel said other lies were told in the effort to keep the lid on the Watergate scandal.

It charged that Mitchell and Ehrlichman lied to the FBI when they said they knew nothing about the Watergate break-in other than what they had read in the newspapers.

And that Mitchell lied to the grand jury when he said that had he known of any illegal scheme to collect political intelligence from the Democrats he would have shut it off. It said he lied also when he denied recalling that Mardian and LaRue had told him of Liddy's involvement in the break-in.

And when Mitchell appeared before the Senate Watergate committee, the grand jury reported, he lied when he said that as of June 19, he hadn't heard of the Gemstone file, the logs from the Watergate wiretaps.

Haldeman was accused of lying, not only about the March 21 meeting, but also when he denied being aware that the \$350,000 was being used as hush money.

Strachan was accused of lying about the \$350,000 and Ehrlichman of lying to the grand jury when he said he couldn't remember when he was advised of Liddy's involvement in the break-in.

It was those events that the grand jury characterized as "deceit, craft, trickery and dishonest means" by which the defendants sought "to obstruct and impede the due administration of justice."

Associated Press
